



## **Presbyterian Church of Canada Apology to the Indigenous People – June 2024**

By Elizabeth MacLeod

On September 29th, we celebrated our service for Orange Shirt Day in commemoration of the acceptance of our part as a church in the Residential School System. I mentioned at that time that the Presbyterian National Church had issued an apology for that complicity and directed you to the web page to read the formal Apology. I have decided it would also be helpful, especially to those without internet access, to have a printed version of such.

### **THE APOLOGY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA FOR ITS COMPLICITY IN COLONIZATION AND THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM**

#### **Introduction**

We, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, humbly offer this apology to the generations of Indigenous people and communities harmed by the residential schools and day schools we operated.

We originally made a Confession in 1994 for our role in operating residential schools and colonization but we have realized the inadequacy of that Confession. We apologize for our slowness and the apathy of our response. We are deeply sorry.

We acknowledge the families whose children were taken to schools without telling their families where the children were being taken and who never returned, who remain lost today.

We acknowledge with grief the many unmarked graves that have been found and will be found, including at schools that we ran. We remember the children who never made it home.

We apologize for the impact of the genocide of colonization, forced assimilation and racism to which we actively contributed. Many Survivors and intergenerational Survivors have shared very personal and traumatic experiences in the context of Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings and within the congregations, committees and governing bodies of the church.

We acknowledge the strength and courage of Survivors for sharing your experiences in the schools and the heavy burdens you, your families and communities still bear.

We acknowledge the pain and difficulty of sharing and reliving the truth of your lived experience.

We acknowledge that the church's apology itself, as well as the presence of church representatives making the apology, may be triggering, evoking trauma for some by surfacing memories of devastating experiences in residential schools.



## Apology

We acknowledge that Indigenous children suffered at residential schools.

**The Presbyterian Church in Canada ran**

Ahousaht Residential School in British Columbia,  
Alberni Residential School in British Columbia,  
Birtle Residential School in Manitoba,  
Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School in Shoal Lake, Ontario,  
Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School in Kenora, Ontario,  
Crowstand Residential School in Saskatchewan,  
File Hills Residential School in Saskatchewan,  
Muscowpetung (later known as “Lakesend”) Residential School in Saskatchewan,  
Portage la Prairie Residential School in Manitoba,  
Regina Industrial School in Saskatchewan,  
Round Lake Residential School in Saskatchewan  
and Stoney Plain Residential School in Alberta.

We apologize for taking children from their homes, parents, grandparents and communities. We apologize for traumatizing parents and communities and taking away their rights to protect their children.

We honour and respect the languages of the land and apologize for punishing Indigenous students for speaking their traditional languages.

We apologize for attempting to eliminate Indigenous identity and Cultural and Spiritual traditions. We apologize for the abuse Indigenous children suffered, including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and Spiritual abuses.

We apologize for the weaponization of food that happened in the schools and for non-consensual experiments with food, nutrition and medical procedures that were conducted on children.

We apologize for the lost lives, for children who died while at residential schools – from disease, neglect, suicide, attempts to run away and from violence by teachers, staff and volunteers.

We apologize that the schools created an isolated and unsafe environment where violence was condoned and students learned violence. We regret, and are deeply sorry, that we provided conditions where students could abuse other students.

We acknowledge and apologize for the resulting loss of bloodlines, of ancestors and of people who would not grow to become Elders, the huge loss of culture and future for nations this meant.



We apologize that when children died their parents were not always informed, they were not always returned to their communities and their burial sites were sometimes unmarked or the markers were not maintained and the record of names was not kept.

We apologize for the church's attitude of white superiority, for its assimilating policies and practices, for the racism of treating Indigenous people as less than human and for the ongoing intergenerational effects of our complicity with colonization and the schools that continue to negatively impact families and communities. We acknowledge that this systemic racism continues to impact Indigenous people, including through: insecure housing; poverty; forced dependence on social assistance; experiencing lateral and domestic violence, in particular toward Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ people as named in the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

We acknowledge this has led to hopelessness, mental health crises and the tragedy of suicide, barriers to completing education and to accessing health care. We acknowledge this has led to the breakdown of family bonds that results in children taken into foster care, gang involvement, exploitation, addictions and incarceration.

We are sorry for how long it has taken for The Presbyterian Church in Canada to begin to understand the depth of harm we have caused, and we still have much to learn. For our complicity in colonization and the residential school system, we are deeply, deeply sorry.

### **We therefore offer five fundamental commitments:**

We will continue to listen and learn from Indigenous people, leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, welcoming and engaging voices from both within and beyond The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

We will continue the work of reconciliation, responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and the work of reparation that we have begun.

We will respect traditional Indigenous spiritual practices.

We will listen to and tell the truth about the past.

We will work to support Indigenous-led healing and wellness initiatives and stand in solidarity with Indigenous people and communities

## FROM THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Knox Search Committee continues to do their work. The Knox pulpit vacancy was posted on the website of the National church on September 9, 2024, following the completion of the congregational survey and the congregational profile. (At the time of this writing, there are currently 33 full-time pulpit vacancies listed on the Presbyterian Church in Canada website.)

We are in the process of 'reaching out' to interesting candidates who may be considering a move and inviting them to consider all that Knox, St. Thomas has to offer. As we await applicants, the Search Committee has been working on our search criteria which was informed by the responses to the congregational survey. We have established our interview questions and have only a bit of fine-tuning left to do on our interview structure.

We are blessed to have the direction and perspective provided by our Interim Moderator, Rev. Deb Dolbear-VanBilsen. She currently is the minister in the two-point charge of Glencoe Presbyterian Church and St. Johns Presbyterian Church, in Wardsville.

We are grateful to individuals in the congregation who have chosen to sit in the first seven rows of the sanctuary in support of the Search process. This allows our balcony cameras to reflect the sanctuary as it is, and not portray a largely empty Sunday morning service. If you are concerned about your health and the ever present threat of Covid, you are encouraged to wear masks and use the hand sanitizer that is available throughout the Knox building. If you are more comfortable "social distancing" further back in the sanctuary, that's perfectly understandable.

The Search Committee is comprised of eleven representative members of the congregation:

John Lyle - representing Elders, Board of Managers & Human Resources Committee

Pat Meathrell - representing Elders and the Junior and Senior Choirs

Sue Mills - representing the Clerks of Session, Elders & the Pastoral Care Team

Art Gutmanis - representing the Board of Managers

Janet Taylor-McCaig - representing the Board of Managers

Emily Hartle - representing the Youth at Knox

Des Chiu - representing the newer members of the congregation

Len Palmer - representing the newer members of the congregation

Kathleen Gingrich - representing the young families of the congregation

William McIlveen - representing the young families of the congregation.

Donna Ellis - Search Committee Chair - representing Elders, Human Resources Committee, & Music Committee

You are welcome to speak with any members of the Search Committee if you have ideas, suggestions and/or concerns, keeping in mind that all committee members are bound by very strict rules governing confidentiality. This confidentiality is necessary to protect the interests of Knox, St. Thomas, as well as potential candidates/applicants.

Yours in Christ ...Donna Ellis

## WHAT DO WE LOOK LIKE THROUGH A TRANSITION?

Many people are wondering what happens during the time between the minister retiring and when the new minister is called. Well, here is a short synopsis of that time. Hoping that this will give everyone a place where they can go when questions arise and who can answer them.

First the retirement of a church minister leaves what is called a vacancy. The first step is for the London Presbytery to assign an Interim Moderator to our church. We are very fortunate to have Rev Deb Dolbear Van Bilson as our Interim Moderator.

### **Duties of the Interim Moderator are as such:**

- Moderate the Session Meeting once a month – no Session can meet without the Moderator.
- Make sure that the Church has a weekly pulpit supply and it's scheduled Communion services during the vacancy.
- Helps with serious pastoral care issues such as death and/or sickness.
- Meets with the Search Committee during this time and helps to guide the process.
- Keeps Presbytery updated through monthly reports and seeks help from Presbytery on behalf of the congregation should that be necessary.

As you can see the duties of the Interim Moderator are limited but necessary.

### **Duties of the Session are:**

- To continue with the work of the church with the Interim Moderator.
- To be available to the members of the congregation for concerns and questions.
- To be the one who welcomes and introduces various pulpit supply.
- To keep their people informed of the process through their districts and other committees they may be on.
- Essentially to be as available and visible as possible during this time.

During a vacancy, the church needs to begin a search for a new minister:

### **Duties of the Search Committee is to:**

- Determine on congregational input what the requirements are for the new minister. That is done through the questionnaire. At Knox, this questionnaire was sent out last summer and then a profile of our Church was put together for advertising the position both locally and nationally via several platforms. You are also encouraged to read the profile on the Knox website.
- Research and set up interviews with potential candidates when necessary.
- Keep the Congregation informed of their work in a very basic way as much of their work must remain confidential, for all involved in the search – especially from a point of applicants and interviews.

### **Duties of the Congregation is:**

- To trust in the process that has been used and updated in the PCC for years.
- To pray for all involved in the process that the Holy Spirit is with them during this search time.
- To be willing to do what is necessary to give the best impression of our church, even if it means sitting closer to the front on Sundays.
- Also, if there is a person whom you think might make a good applicant we would appreciate your informing the Search committee or Interim Moderator. Please do not approach the person yourself, simply pass on the name.

I hope this brief outline is helpful to everyone who wonders how we navigate this transitional time. A time of transition can be one of uncertainty and anxiety, but we know that our God is in control and only has our best interest at heart. Let us keep praying and keep the faith!

## REMINDERS FROM THE OFFICE



Groups and individuals who require the use of a room in the church in the 2024-2025 year are asked to book it through the church office (519-631-2414).

If you have purchased an item for the church and are turning in receipts, please ensure that the receipts are accompanied by an expense form. Expense forms are available in the baskets on the wall outside the office.

If you need to take an item from the church off the premises, please contact the office. The approval of the minister and/or clerks of session is required.

Announcements for the bulletin must be received by Wednesday at noon at the very latest for the coming week's bulletin.

## KNOX CHURCH WELCOME COMMITTEE

Our thanks to everyone who volunteered to greet each Sunday this year. It's always welcoming to see a friendly face as you enter the church. Thanks also to those who volunteered at the registration table for the photography sessions.

**Knox Name Tags** - If you requested a name tag but haven't seen us yet to pick it up, check out the wooden Name Tag tray in the front foyer. Unclaimed tags are placed there.

**Personal Photo Packages Update** - The good news is that as of Nov. 18th your photos were ready to be sent. However with the postal strike on, IPC are figuring out which carrier they will use to get your photos to you. Hopefully by the time you read this newsletter in early December you will have already received your pictures.

**Photo Directory Update** - On Nov. 12th we received the draft copy of the directory. Our committee members are now editing it to check for any errors, which is a long process with over 200 names with contact information in the roster and also 150 family photos. We were very happy with how many of you signed up for photos and/or contact information - a big thank you to all! Once the corrected draft is received from us (probably also by courier) IPC estimates that for the final publication of directories we should allow up to 8 weeks.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Rodney Outreach Committee for donating funds to purchase extra directories. We thought everyone noted in the directory (whether photos or just info) should receive a free copy. Some copies, of course, will be retained for the new minister and for new members over the next few years until a new directory will be created.

A blessed Merry Christmas to everyone and a safe holiday season!

Diane Pease

## LEADING WITH CARE:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is committed to providing safe environments within its ministries. In 2005, the General Assembly adopted the Leading with Care Policy, which states the denomination's intention in these terms: It is the policy of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that all persons, and in particular all children, youth and vulnerable adults, who participate in the denomination's programs/ministries and/or use the denomination's facilities will be cared for with Christian compassion and will be safe. The Leading with Care Policy gives direction to the denomination as it seeks to fulfill this commitment.



At Knox, we seek to Lead with Care in the following ways:

- 1) A printed policy including position descriptions has been adopted by the Session.
- 2) All elders, pastoral visitors, staff and Christian Education volunteers are required to submit a police records check, including a vulnerable persons' screening every five years.
- 3) Windows have been installed in every classroom and office.
- 4) Every year, our Christian Education Committee, Pastoral Care and Session are reminded of our church's policy of protection and care. A covenant of care is signed by all leaders working with children and vulnerable adults.
- 5) A fire drill occurs once a year and the first aid kits are regularly inspected and replenished.
- 6) A defibrillator was purchased for both the sanctuary level and in Rodney Hall.
- 7) Recently, security cameras were installed (thanks to a government grant!) to ensure our entryways are safe, and to add security for staff working alone in the building.

**Defibrillators:** Knox has two defibrillators in the building – one on the south side of the narthex (at the sanctuary level). The second in Rodney Hall. If there is a medical emergency, open the case to the defibrillator. An automated voice will give you step by step instructions on how to proceed.



**First Aid Kits:** Knox has numerous first aid kits throughout the building (Sunday Kool classrooms, Nursery, Kitchen, Rodney Hall, Minister's Office etc.) We are grateful to Karen Martin and Deb Cooper who are checking these kits on a regular basis for re-stocking. Mary Kay Baker is the alternate if Karen and Deb or not available. If you notice a missing item in a kit, please contact the church office and we will let Karen know what items need replacing.



## KITCHEN WHICHES

After an extremely busy summer and fall, the Kitchen Whiches are having a well deserved a break. We have preserved 500jars of pickles, jams and jellies, made over 100 torchières, 150 apple pies and endless cups of soup for the bazaar. Some of these items will still be sold into the new year while supplies last.



We welcome 2 new Whiches to our group, Tina Willison and Rhonda Dawdy. They have had their initiation and seem to be staying so I guess we have passed their criterial!

We will be having our Christmas get together in December (like most groups). We will be putting our brooms down and enjoying some Whiches Brew along with many laughs.

If you are interested in joining this group of feisty ladies please cotact Wendy Liebrechts or Pam O'Sullivan. We would be happy to have you. We meet the second Wednesday of each month.

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas with those you hold dear and all the best in 2025

Wendy Liebrechts, Deb Cooper, Wendy Thomson, Jan Barrett, Marg Rieger, Jo-anne Debliek, Karen Martin, Tina Willison, Rhonda Dawdy, Lynda Finlay, Pam Smith, Pam O'Sullivan

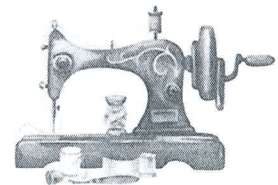


## SEW IT SEAMS

The machines have been busy along with everyone's creativity. Our frequently heard comments during our group are:

- "my bobbin is empty"
- "oh no, I forgot to bring"
- "ouch"
- "look at this picture"

And the two questions that are always asked in every group are:  
"did someone make tea?" and "does anyone have a seam ripper?"



Looking forward to 2025 and sewing for our community. We usually meet 2 times a month and if you are interested in joining the group, please contact the church office for contact name and number.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Pam O'Sullivan, Marg Rieger, Jean-Marie Steward, Gail McLarty-Leitch, ElainChiu, Katherine Michie



## KNOX PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Well that's almost a wrap for 2024. We have been busy planning and hosting the Tartan Bazaar and again I'm please to say another success. Not only is it a financial success but most importantly the friendships and comradery within our church family is outstanding. The hours that people have put in planning, building, creating, cooking, volunteering, sorting, donating , purchasing items for our bazaar are really mind boggling. KPW would like to thank each and everyone of you for your continued support.

We will be planning our budget in early 2025 for the year ahead. If you would like to see us support a community charity please submit to one of the representatives . You can see the charities we have supported in 2024 on the bulletin board in Rodney Hall.

KPW would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Chairperson & Treasurer—Pam O'Sullivan

Secretary—Lynda Finlay

Cards—Sue Mills

Kitchen Whiches—Wendy Liebrechts

Knitting Group—Janice Todd

Sew It Seams—Marg Rieger

Outreach Circle—Lynn Openchuck

Crafters—Karen Martin

Busy Moms—Meghan Brockington

Women of the Congregation—Margie Gloin, Pam Smith, Sue Mills



## KNOX FOODGRAINS COMMITTEE

The Knox Foodgrains Committee Harvest Luncheon on October 20 was attended by over 100 members of the congregation and friends. The Committee offered nine delicious soups, buns, cake and ice cream which were all well received. The Committee is pleased to announce that \$6245 was raised through free-will offerings and from previous services.

The funds in the Foodgrains account now total \$12,663.41. Additional on-line donations and business donations will add to the account before years-end.

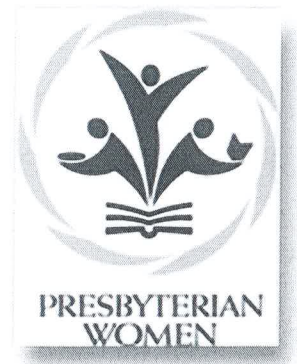
Thank you to everyone who have made our 2024 appeal a success; our volunteers, our local businesses: St.Thomas Foodland, Briwood, Shaw's Ice Cream and the Original Cakerie and especially the generous members of our congregation.

Special thanks go to Bill Allen, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank Ambassador, who as our guest speaker, brought reality to Knox of how our donations are used to help people in Malawi to improve crop yields and recover from a cyclone disaster.

The next meeting for the Knox Foodgrains Committee will be on April 23, 2025 to plan for the Spring Luncheon on May25, 2025. As always, any Knox member or adherent is more than welcome to join the Knox Foodgrains Committee and help us to continue our efforts to eliminate world hunger.

Jack McBride

Secretary, Knox Foodgrains Committee



## FUNERALS

Linda Simmons—Nov. 5, 2024

Elizabeth Adair—Nov. 11, 2024



If you have questions or would like more information about our church, reach out to one of the elders or to the Knox staff.

## KNOX ELDERS

Dr. Ian Begg  
Brian Bolt  
Bonnie Brown  
Carole Cowan  
Jo-Anne Deblieck  
Donna Ellis  
Malcolm Ferguson  
Jennifer Holt  
Bill Horn  
Maggie Horn  
Tom Jackson

Bryce Jones  
Wendy Liebrechts  
John Lyle  
Elizabeth MacLeod  
Jean Macpherson  
Jack McBride  
Angus McKenzie  
Marion McKenzie  
Patricia Meathrell  
Marg Metcalf

Suzanne Mills  
Randy Mills  
Pam O'Sullivan  
Diane Pease  
Sharon Pinylo  
Marg Rieger  
Brent Sifton  
Richard (Tony) Stacpoole  
Pete Taylor  
Frank Williamson



## KNOX STAFF

**Interim Moderator:** Rev. Deb Dolbear-VanBilson of Glencoe Presbyterian Church 519-287-2743

**Christian Education and Family Minister Co-ordinator:** Meghan Brockington

[m.brockington@knoxstthomas.ca](mailto:m.brockington@knoxstthomas.ca)

**Office Administrator:** Kathy Kestle 519-631-2414 [office@knoxstthomas.ca](mailto:office@knoxstthomas.ca)

**Director of Music:** Amadeusz Kazubowski-Houston [amadeusz.scherzo@gmail.com](mailto:amadeusz.scherzo@gmail.com)

**Church Office Hours:** Monday – Thurs. 9:00 am – 1:00 pm.

(NOTE: Fri. 9:30—12:00 noon. The office door is locked but Meghan is in the building. Please call ahead so she can ensure the door is open.)